

ACCORDING TO ORDERS

By JOANNA SINGLE

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He kissed her again. Then he held her off and looked at the sweet face with the pride of new possession. Her eyes fell beneath his gaze.

"Alida, when did you begin to love me?" She twisted saucily from him.

"I think I won't tell. That I do, should satisfy you."

"Yes, it should—and it doesn't. I want to know all about it. Why in the world should you love me? What made you?"

"Well, for one thing, you are very nice in your way." Her tone was demure. "And father as good as said I must. When you first came here I and I were downtown and met you."

"And on sight my heart got down for you to walk on. I remember that first time." He drew her to a seat beside him on a log in the wood adjoining the links where they were supposed to be playing golf. "What did you say?"

"I asked who you were and was informed that you were the new lawyer, good, but hopelessly young—and—"

"Impenetrable," Philip Hardy supplied. "Guilty, your honor. What could he expect of a new lawyer? And I can't help being young."

"And he remarked on your good looks."

"Naturally," said Philip, modestly. "He has good taste. He said he likes his future son-in-law. But why does he like you like me?"

"Well, father was writing me for a time, and he said he was going to bring his cousin Will Robertson soon to play golf with him. Of course I didn't know he didn't know his little scheme. And then I saw you and objected more than ever to being saved up for a mere comis. who probably wants me as little as I want him."

"Your father needn't worry. I know Robertson at college. He is engaged to Eleanor Payne and wants to get into the good graces of her father." Alida gasped.

"Well! And I almost hated Eleanor because I thought you were in love with her! Father thinks so."

"It was you, I know, with her to avoid the invitation to tell you that I loved you for I had no right to offer you—nothing. And here I am! I can give you a little home—nothing like your father's and I think I can make you happy. Will you come?" She leaned her cheek to his.

"Yes," she answered simply. "I will come." He expressed his satisfaction with silent effectiveness. Then he asked:

"When shall I tell your father?"

"Oh, Phil! He will never consent. Don't ask him yet!"

"I said 'tell him' not 'ask him,' dear. Does he approve my supposed passion for Eleanor Payne?"

"I don't know if he has any if he loved her now as he himself had been."

"As faithful Twenty-timers, are following instructions. The other evening you, doctor, bade us establish homes of our own with Western girls in each. You, Judge, with the others, pledged your support and consent."

"I have also the consent of your daughter, whom I have wanted since we were in college together. May I have her soon?" Then, before the astonished parental eyes an inexplicable shifting of manners seemed to be taking place. Hardy took—Alida by the hand. Robertson put an arm about—Eleanor. The young tribunal stood gasping, not trusting themselves to speak till some one should explain. Then William Robertson, M. D., came to the rescue.

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"Doctor, redeem your word to sanction with your fatherly consent any attempt of mine to marry a Western girl. I have been among you six months—six minutes was enough to make me want Alida—and you knew me not. The two young couples found the old gentlemen, who finally found their tongues.

"But I thought—"

"I wanted Philip," Alida interrupted.

"And I wanted Will," added Eleanor. The judge laughed.

"And they wanted you—and you don't want us just at present. I take it! Doctor, where's the library and that Dutch lunch? I think we had better adjourn and adjust ourselves to the new order of things. They would have it their own way, anyhow, you know! What do you say?" For answer the old doctor suddenly hissed his daughter. Then he pushed her out of his house.

The two old men left the room together.

"Fine chap, young Hardy: glad to have him in the club, but I'm thankful to Miss Payne for keeping him in her nest. He's a good boy, though, and I think Alida would take a fancy to him."

"His mother and I have always wanted her to marry Robertson."

"When he comes he can look after his own interests."

A week passed. Alida and Philip met often at social functions and at the home of Eleanor, to whom Hardy was apparently devoted. Robertson, too, was voted into the club and followed in Alida's wake from the center too. Well, the last time Dr. Green came he said to me, "Mrs. Cutting, we may now call him out of danger." So I suppose I might say he is, and yet it doesn't seem much like it with Dr. Morse coming every other day.—Yours, Companion.

"Beauty," he finished, addressing Hardy and Robertson, "you alone of this amateur body are single men—the rest are digitized men of family. It is your solemn duty to marry and have home for your own solace and the entertainment of this organization. You should choose from Westerville, for her fate may not fall into your hands. This is all. Gentlemen, your health and happiness; and we are

peel you to act according to orders. After the applause ceased Hardy rose. His speech was brief and brilliant, and again he turned to the clapping, and he waited for silence. At last he turned directly to Alida's father and took up the last clause in his recommendation.

"We shall," he said—"for I speak also for Robertson—obey you, doctor, as far as in us lies. But, supposing that your daughters will none of us and our homes, what then? You have commanded us. It is therefore your duty to uphold us in the way that never did run smooth." Will you aid and abet us? In any such scheme have we your co-operation and support—your consent?" The words, like opinion, had spread like wildfire through the audience.

"Do you pledge us your fatherly sanction?" He paused for a reply, and at a signal from Judge Payne they rose as one man and uttered a solemn "We do."

A few days later Dr. Marston brought Judge Payne home from the chess club for a midnight lunch. The light burned low in the library, but passing through the dim hall they heard sounds of mirth emanating from the dining room. The doctor pushed aside the portieres.

In the soft candle light Alida presided at a dainty lunch. Philip Hardy sat opposite, and at her right William Robertson faced Eleanor Payne. The young folks rose gleefully.

"Join us!" they cried, but the doctor shook his head.

"The judge and I have outlined midnight lobster salads and Welsh rabbits. We'll have Dutch lunch in the library. You seem to be having a good time!" He beamed on them. "May I ask if these festivities mean anything in particular?"

"Only an informal attempt to satisfy him, 'Daddy!'" Alida answered. "We have been at cards all evening."

Hardy leaned over and said to Bob: "We're in a low tone. As well may as ever they are both in high good humor." Both men arose, and the girls, hardly knowing why, arose too.

"Sir," spoke Hardy, "this is something rather especial. We are celebrating the consent of two fathers to the engagement of their daughters." Judge Payne looked approvingly at his daughter and mother, and then at the doctor and his wife.

"Alida and Robertson, with pleasure concealed satisfaction that his son had carried so perfectly. But all at once before the astonished parental eyes an inexplicable shifting of manners seemed to be taking place. Hardy took—Alida by the hand. Robertson put an arm about—Eleanor. The young tribunal stood gasping, not trusting themselves to speak till some one should explain. Then William Robertson, M. D., came to the rescue.

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"Get better acquainted with him first. You know he's president of the Twenty-timers!"

"Yes, and of the bank, and the golf club and the Improvement League, and, for all I know, the kindergarten."

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"I am. Initiation comes in a week or two. I must try to win the doctor over."

"Well, follow Eleanor conspicuously—not me. We must go. It's too dark even to pretend to play golf."

Philip left his betrothed at the gate of her home. As he swung happily down the street he overtook Eleanor, and as he bent to tell her the joy that had beset him they met Alida's father, Mr. Marston, and old Dr. Hayes.

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